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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7685  
INFO RHMFISS/CDR USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL//SCJ2//  
RULGPIA/USCOMSOLANT

UNCLAS BUENOS AIRES 000606

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STATE FOR INR/R/MR, I/GWHA, WHA, WHA/PDA, WHA/BSC,  
WHA/EPSC  
CDR USSOCOM FOR J-2 IAD/LAMA

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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#)  
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; UK-IRAN; SITUATION IN IRAN; 03/28/07;  
BUENOS AIRES

#### 1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's key international stories are related to the dispute between the UK and Iran over the seizure of 15 British Naval personnel; and the situation in Iran given that the world is "on the verge of a new military confrontation in the (Persian) Gulf."

#### 2. OPINION PIECES

##### - "A risky area"

Claudio Mario Aliscioni, international columnist of leading "Clarín," penned (03/28) "It is too soon to determine whether the world is on the verge of a new military confrontation in the (Persian) Gulf."

"According to a Zogby Institute opinion poll, most people in the US, as well as most of the business establishment and the media, do not believe that an attack against Iran is necessary. However, Iranians are also making maneuvers with their ships in the area. And this is why it is hard to dismiss an 'involuntary' incident that could unexpectedly offer fundamentalists from both sides an excuse for an attack."

##### - "London's limited options"

Graciela Iglesias, London-based correspondent for daily-of-record "La Nación," comments (03/28) "UK PM Tony Blair's warning that his government is ready to move on to 'another stage' in the event Iran does not release the 15 UK marines recalled the specter of an escalation in a crisis that could lead to war."

"The impact of his warning on the Middle East remains uncertain, but obviously his tacit threat of force is one more move in the fewer UK options in the framework of the dangerous diplomatic game in which it is involuntarily merged with Tehran."

"Regardless of the fact that the prevailing tension does not signal any kind of commitment, UK authorities still bet on a discreetly negotiated solution. German FM Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who volunteered to act as a mediator, could play a crucial role in the crisis."

"... The most drastic option for the UK Government, aside from declaring war, is cutting diplomatic ties through the closure of its embassy in Tehran and expulsing the Iranian representative in London. Nevertheless, this would deprive the Foreign Office from direct information lines, which do matter in handling a crisis like this one."

"For the time being, London impatiently expects Tehran to provide

some wink about the situation of those who were apprehended and to reveal what it expects in return for their release.

"They believe that some in the Iranian Government would be inclined to put an end to the crisis through a prisoner exchange. Tehran has expressed more than once its irritation over the arrest by US forces of five members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard...

"However, this move would depend on Washington's willingness, and many in the White House are likely to advise against it under the argument that every concession granted to Tehran could encourage it to repeat similar actions in the future in order to obtain 'bigger compensation,' such as the lifting of economic sanctions.

"... The last possibility left to the UK Government is launching an 'ultimatum' and setting a deadline for the release of its prisoners under the threat of retaliation. Nonetheless, the Ahmadinejad regime has given signs that it does not lend much attention to deadlines imposed by international organizations."

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